

My name is Susan Myers. I live in West Hartford, CT. I present this testimony as a mom, and an aunt to those who started smoking early in high school and who are addicted to tobacco (nicotine). As a taxpayer, I am ashamed of what the State of CT has done, or rather NOT done, over the past 20 years to fund tobacco control programs.

I know that Connecticut has the second highest tax levied on tobacco products in the country, but merely raising the tax on tobacco products is not enough. The State needs to fund tobacco control programs (e.g. education and cessation programs). There is a financial benefit to the State by doing so.

Tobacco use is a financial burden on all CT tax payers. In CT the 2021 cost of healthcare directly caused by smoking was \$2.03 BILLION!! By funding tobacco control programs (e.g. education and cessation) we will decrease the number of smokers and therefore reduce healthcare costs driven by tobacco use.

From a revenue perspective, in 2021 CT was \$473.2 M richer, due to taxes realized on the sale of tobacco products and the annual payment from the Tobacco Settlement Fund. For those of you who are not aware of the Tobacco Settlement Fund I invite you to find out more. CT has been receiving funds since 2000. In 2021, CT received \$114.5 M and is anticipated to receive \$126.2 M in 2022. The amount received varies slightly from year to year. Of note, CT has not used ANY of the Tobacco Settlement Fund for tobacco control/cessation programs since 2016. This fact should embarrass us all.

CT should NEVER rank last, yet we do. We are 50th, due to the poor record of what we spend on tobacco control programs. From 2008 - 2018 CT spent an average of \$3M per year on tobacco control programs. The bottom ranking is due to ZERO dollars funded in 2021 and it's been zero funding since 2017.

Additional data points for your consideration:

- the CDC recommends that the State of CT spend \$32 M on tobacco control each year.
- It is estimated that the tobacco industry spent \$55.9 M in 2021 marketing their products in CT.

My ask: That we adequately fund tobacco control programs in CT starting in 2022 and for years to come. I support the ask from the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, the American Lung Association and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids for \$12M annually in tobacco control program funding. I believe that \$1 M per month is an easy ask and easily funded out of tobacco taxes and the Tobacco Settlement Fund. While we can and should do more, funding \$12 Million would be a welcome start.